

## **INFORMATION PACK FOR MELBOURNE FRINGE'S ACCESS FUND**

Melbourne Fringe is accepting applications for the Access Fund for 2026. This is made possible through our Radical Access and Cash for Equity programs. This fund aims to support Fringe artists to remove barriers to participation commonly experienced by d/Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent audience members.

We welcome all artists registering in Melbourne Fringe 2026 to apply.

As part of preparation for this application, we recommend having an initial look into our Resource Hub. In here we have the [Accessibility Zone](#), which outlines an array of information about access, including accessible approaches when making performance.

### **Eligibility criteria**

- You must have a registered event (of any genre) in the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival (*We understand you may be mid registration at the time of application. It is OK to apply for the Access Fund while mid rego.*)
- Be seeking a contribution of between \$500-\$3000 towards access integration.

The Access Fund provides only a contribution towards access. The strongest applications will reflect that they are contributing some of their own fees and/or other funding towards access.

## Key information for embracing embedded access

Access may be embedded, integrated or could be a creative layer within your project.

We want you to be bold and ambitious with this funding. We want you to be creative in your approach and explore ways to increase the accessibility of your event, even if it's outside of the usual frameworks.

We have some examples below.

In this context, examples of embedded access could be:

- Adding access tools into all performances. Such as building Auslan interpretation, audio description, or open captioning into the staging, script, or narrative itself. This makes access a part of the experience for all audience members, rather than it being a separate add-on.
- Developing multi-sensory elements for a work that engages multiple senses. For example, through sound, touch, movement. This is so Disabled audiences with different access needs can engage in a larger variety of ways. With the aim to have deeper engagement and to a broader audience.
- Engaging in professional access consultancy to ensure you're tailoring your access approach to your event. You might work with them in many different ways, or one focused way. Such as, supporting your preparation of access material including sensory guides, connecting you to specialised providers, or giving feedback on your event and existing access plan.

- Purchasing or hiring equipment that makes your show more accessible - some examples are, overcoming a single step into a theatre by adding a ramp, creating signage about the nature of audience participation to demystify the experience for neurodivergent audience members, or buying sensory kits for a Relaxed Performance, etc. These items would ideally be there for the entire season, and not a one-off performance.

## **Key information for involving access services**

Melbourne Fringe will also consider covering the costs of access service provision, such as, Auslan interpretation or Audio Description of performance session/s. If you can demonstrate that this is the best approach for your specific event, and you have thought about how to engage the community/s the service is for. If a higher \$ figure will allow for deeper engagement with a service, we encourage you to be ambitious rather than worrying about keeping costs low.

## **Case study for embedded access vs access service approach**

### **Auslan embedded:**

We are much more likely to fund having an Auslan interpreter that is fully integrated into the creative aspects of the making process. That could mean;

- Early consultation with a member of the d/Deaf community, with the Auslan interpreter present

- Both d/Deaf consultant and Auslan interpreter attending a meeting with the creative team
- The Auslan interpreter being a part of the rehearsal process, with drop ins by the consultant

Result: One of the aims for this is deeper community engagement. This is much more likely to be achieved with a longer lead up time, and a greater level of engagement with the d/Deaf community through this process and through working with a consultant with lived experience.

### **Auslan service:**

This is more of the standard/known approach to access. Whereby an artist/producer would reach out to an Auslan Interpreting company for an event. It might mean;

- Booking an interpreter through the company
- Hoping that audiences requiring the service attend the event

Result: A possible scenario whereby those who require the service don't know about it, or don't have a connection with the work and don't feel they can trust that the production is culturally safe for them. It is possible that a member/s of the d/Deaf community may still attend, but it is much less likely than an integrated approach.

### **A strong application will demonstrate**

- Comprehensive planning and consideration into which forms of access best suit your event
- An understanding of how the proposed accessibility will remove or reduce barriers for audiences

- That you have the capacity to deliver what you are proposing to a high level
- Consideration into how you will make sure you reach the community/s the access is targeted towards
- Meaningful co-investment from your creative team\*

*\* There are plenty of ways you can "co-invest" in access for your event and not all of them require money. Some are low-cost or free, but require work to get them right. What we want to see is that you're committed to access - either by contributing to some of the cost, or committing to doing the labour to make your events more accessible.*

## **The Application process**

The 2026 Access Fund has 2 rounds, and 1 stage of application – the EOI. To start your application and look at the questions, please click here to go to the [Access Fund 2026 application form](#).

The timeline is:

- **Thurs 23 April** Round 1 Access Fund closes.
- **Friday 1 May** Round 1 Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application.
- **Thursday 14 May** Round 2 Access Fund opens.
- **Thursday 4 June** Round 2 Access Fund closes.
- **Friday 12 June** Round 2 Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application.

## **Applications in Other Formats**

If using Airtable forms isn't accessible for you, please get in touch. We are keen to understand how to best accommodate your access needs. We can accept applications in a variety of formats, including text documents, video and audio files. We are also happy to work with you on other accessible application processes. We have a great team to support access, so please email [access@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:access@melbournefringe.com.au) to start a conversation. You can also call the Melbourne Fringe office by phone. The Melbourne Fringe phone number is (03) 9660 9600 (available Monday to Friday, 10am-6pm). We are open to your ideas around process. However, we cannot change the timeframes unfortunately – you'll still need to get your proposal in by Thursday 23 April.

## **Questions or enquiries**

If you have any questions about this opportunity, please contact us. You can reach our Artist Services team at [artists@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:artists@melbournefringe.com.au).

Do you have questions about access or applications in other formats? You can reach our access team at [access@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:access@melbournefringe.com.au).

Alternatively, for all queries you are welcome to phone our office. The Melbourne Fringe phone number is (03) 9660 9600 (available Monday to Friday, 10am-6pm).

[You may contact us through the National Relay Service, and the link is available if you click on this sentence.](#) Alternatively, you could download Deaf-owned Relay Service [Convo](#).